

## MEETING RECORD

**NAME OF GROUP:** NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Thursday, June 22, 2006, 8:00 a.m., Conference Room No. 206, Second Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Jim Hewitt, Jeff Searcy and Kim Todd; (Karen Kilgarin, Tom Laging, Patrick O'Donnell and V.J. Nelson absent). Lynn Johnson of Parks and Recreation; Ed Zimmer and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department.

**STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:** Regular Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission meeting

Chair Jeff Searcy opened the meeting and noted that a quorum of members is not present at the meeting therefore, this will be an informal discussion with no action taken.

### **UPDATE ON "THE SOWER EXHIBITION - A STATEWIDE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN" FOR CENTENNIAL MALL (LIZ SHEA-McCOY AND VICKI RANKIN)**

Searcy thanked everyone for appearing and doing the work they have done on this project.

Lynn Johnson presented a memo to the Commission regarding this project.

Liz Shea-McCoy introduced Judy Liggett. Mrs. Liggett and her husband (Dr. Scott) are donating \$8,000.00 seed money for this project.

Vicki Rankin stated this is a project to raise awareness for the needs of Centennial Mall. They would like to involve the entire state. This is a public art exhibition. This is a better way to encourage public participation. This will require all the counties to be behind the project. There are two components, art and education. As part of that, Shea-McCoy and she would like to go across the state to talk with people. This will involve 4<sup>th</sup> grade schools across the state. How the funds raised from this will be utilized will be at the discretion of the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission. Perhaps the funds could go into maintenance for Centennial Mall. Whatever time line is necessary, they are committed. They would like to be able to secure funds for the project cost before this is started. They would like to conceptually move this project forward.

Ripley would like clarified that this is a continuing concept for the art as was presented previously. Is each county going to have an artist who does the artwork for their county and is it up to each county to find an artist? Rankin replied that a call will go out to each

county. She and Shea-McCoy will be in contact with the counties throughout their travels to educate everyone on the selection process. There will be a jury to vote on the art. The county will select among the artists' maquettes the one that will be recreated full-size for their county.

Shea-McCoy has talked to Jim Abel. Initially they were thinking of an auction at the end of the art project. They want the counties to come together, not compete against each other. Abel suggested they meet with Terry Fairfield from the University. They want to travel the state and meet with people. They also know they need to bring in the Arts Council. They would like the blessing of this committee first before they bring in the Lincoln Arts Council. They think they would be a huge asset to this project.

Shea McCoy stated they would like to get on the Governor's agenda and brief him of this project. They would like to visit with Union Pacific. Scott Moore from Union Pacific has agreed to visit with them. They would like UP as a corporate sponsor.

Ripley wondered if they anticipated public participation in terms of funding. Do they foresee any state money or city money? Shea McCoy replied that this will be all private funds.

Hewitt questioned the time line from when people donate and will there be a minimum amount of funds required before they decide this is a go. Shea-McCoy replied that in the next few months they need to really get busy and would like a commitment. In terms of the amount, it is around \$700,000.00 for the entire project. This is their best guess estimate. They would like to have around \$500,000.00 before they get started. Rankin stated that they would like to get 4<sup>th</sup> graders statewide involved in this project. There would be one sower from each county and the 4<sup>th</sup> grade sowers could also be exhibited. They would like to create a 18-foot sower that could perhaps be placed at the end of Centennial Mall. This would be a temporary exhibition, 6-8 months. They would like to have the sowers installed during the times of state basketball. They believe this would attract a huge amount of tourism. This could get national attention and make a huge statement about the creativity that exists in the State of Nebraska.

Searcy noted that the mall is in disrepair and he thanks the applicant for bringing a tool to provide public attention. What is the size of the models? Rankin replied about 13 inches.

Todd wondered about the public safety with having all the models displayed around the Capitol on a public space.

Johnson noted that most of the funds today are going for Antelope Valley. Another project will be the public plaza. He worries about the funding gap. He worries what will happen if awareness is raised and they can't address the problem. You can't say what will happen in 3-4 years. Shea-McCoy replied that is why this is a statewide project. Funds can come from the private sector. Johnson noted that if this happens in 2008, it will be 2011 or 2012

before any work can begin. Shea-McCoy noted that the campaign can be ongoing for fund-raising and different options. The capital campaign project can carry on. Rankin believes that they can do the fund-raising for this.

Ripley observed that with any effort he has been involved in and allowing support to occur for public projects, involving grade school children is a valuable component. This can be extremely valuable. He knows what discussions have occurred with regards to Centennial Mall and the Parks Dept. He wondered if it is realistic once Antelope Valley and the downtown plaza are committed and projects are rolling, what kind of city hall interest there is for Centennial Mall. Have the City Council members or anyone expressed interest? Ed Zimmer believes there is interest and awareness. There are no dollars in the Capital Improvements Program, but there is recognition of the value of Centennial Mall.

Johnson is excited, but there needs to be awareness raising. It must be linked to the campaign effort. What is the city involvement and the state involvement must be defined.

Zimmer wondered about the time line. Rankin replied that they are flexible. This won't be voted upon by this Commission until August. They share a passion for this project. They would like to see an ongoing commitment. Shea-McCoy noted that this project has the pride of the Capitol in mind. She believes this could really draw national attention. It would raise goodwill amongst Nebraska citizens.

Zimmer noted that they have said they would like to start this year. Shea-McCoy replied that they would like to launch the campaign this year.

Shea-McCoy stated that the whole state could get behind this project. Seven blocks of exhibition space for a "Sower" from each county would be incredible. This could be great for tourism.

Todd wondered what will happen if a county does not want to participate. Rankin replied that if a county has questions, they will go to that county and answer questions.

Zimmer stated that he is unsure that 4<sup>th</sup> graders could be involved in this project due to their current curriculum.

Searcy noted that there will be many details that haven't been thought of yet. Johnson worries about this from a department standpoint. Their staff is involved in Antelope Valley. They can't do this right now. There is a lot of staff involved also in the Rose Garden. As Antelope Valley starts to get south of Vine Street, a lot more staff time is involved. The Corp. of Engineers is driving the time line.

Rankin stated that she believes the concern can be approached when they talk to people. They can tell people this project would not start for five years. They money can sit in an account and accrue interest.

Johnson appreciates the challenges. He can't commit any Parks Department energy and resources right now.

Todd stated that this Commission has been the most committed in trying to get something done for close to two decades. They have attempted to be as positive as possible. She looks at this as a great idea to raise awareness and a fund-raising effort. From a standpoint of having the art project go forward and end up with the reconstruction of Centennial Mall, there is a vagueness and a time shift that has to do with Parks ability to manage the project. Asking a donor to commit to something that may or may not happen is tricky. Donors typically want to hear a date. It's not that the idea is not intriguing, but time lines can be difficult if you can't commit.

Searcy stated that prior to his joining this Commission, the first redesign of Centennial Mall had been done. He questioned the experience for others. Johnson sensed there is a community base, but it needs to be found. Zimmer found the EDAW design process to be a great learning experience.

Searcy did not realize what kind of resources Parks would have to donate. He likes the statewide aspect. Perhaps this could be done in phases. Everyone wants to bring attention to our state. Shea-McCoy stated that the art component is just the launching pad for this whole campaign. This shouldn't end in two years. It should be an ongoing effort.

Rankin thinks they have nothing to lose. They are willing to raise the money. Shea-McCoy stated that the Nebraska Community Foundation has agreed to be the depository for funds. Ripley has offered a website placement for them. They are willing to take the risk.

Ripley stated that he is the furthest thing from a fundraiser. It seems that it is the gap of the unknown and a public awareness campaign and the continuity of what happens in the next three years. That could be the silence that stalls the project. Johnson thinks it is a comprehensive idea. Shea-McCoy and Rankin need to state the sequence of events and they can't.

Zimmer knows that the Commission would like Parks and Recreation to have access to funds to rehabilitate Lincoln Mall. Is this the vehicle that would provide the funding is the question. Johnson thinks we need to be careful how we communicate this. It could be conceived as competing with other projects. Zimmer noted that has happened in the past.

Rankin noted that this would be a statewide project. Zimmer wondered if other counties wouldn't ask what Lincoln was providing for this. Rankin sees tourism dollars for the Capitol. Shea-McCoy wants to get away from the idea of city and state commitment. She believes the private sector will donate funds for this project and everyone can have pride in the State Capitol. Rankin sees that they have nothing to lose by starting fund-raising.

Ripley would like to get Senator Beutler's sense of the state participating in a project at the capital and people statewide participating in a project that is in a single location. There seems to be an attitude of Lincoln gets it all.

Beutler stated that when he was approached with this project, he thought there were two ways to approach this. One of them is a local project with city and local dollars. If you want to entertain the possibility of doing it right, you need a consciousness changing event. The attitude could be this is Lincoln, Lincoln wants our money to do this. It makes it difficult to do this. He thinks there should be state involvement. If you want to make an effort to do it right, there is the possibility that with this event, if you can change people then you can build on the Capitol as a world class symbol. The people of the state don't recognize the State Capitol building as a world class architectural building. This is the number one tourist attraction in Nebraska. This would make it a part of state pride. With the timing, this represents one kind of opportunity to make the mall first class.

Zimmer sees one of the real challenges as the perception. There is a huge leap to carry the sensibility of the State Capitol building to Lincoln Mall. Getting all the pieces to link together for something that would only occur in Lincoln could be problematic. Shea-McCoy realizes that this would be a statewide campaign.

Searcy understands that this will take some work and some risk to see this happen. It will take commitment and passion. He asked Zimmer what kind of process needs to happen from this Commission. Zimmer stated there are three or four simultaneous necessary approvals that would need to happen. If you are exhibiting art in public space, it is a public art effort. There would need to be a determination from Parks Dept. that they were signed on to the public exhibition space. The Commission's most formal approval process is a certificate of appropriateness. He thinks this is the right process to use for a project of this nature. This would probably require further description of the possibilities of displaying all the statues. Public safety, public sidewalks being used, pedestrian movement are among the many issues that would need to be addressed. The City of Lincoln works with the Lincoln Arts Council on public art efforts. That comes into play typically before City Council. The statewide involvement and public partners would be an issue.

Ripley inquired about the process to be followed. Zimmer replied that the Parks Dept. is a partner in the Commission's process. There is no formal checklist. A public art effort has not been done in the Environs space.

Johnson noted that the use of the image of the Sower comes into question. There needs to be a nod that this concept makes sense. There needs to be a conversation with Downtown Lincoln Association and the Lincoln Arts Council. Ripley does not see any significant legal problem with using the image of the Sower. In terms of actual use and protection, it is pretty much in the public domain. He does not anticipate a problem with using the Sower for a project of this nature. Philosophically, he does not personally see a great problem with trying to tie in all 93 counties.

Zimmer has a concern. He enjoys seeing the Sower. This project asks 93 artists to improve upon or comment on the Sower. He is not sure how that will translate philosophically. Shea-McCoy sees that is where the statewide jury comes into play. They will judge the images.

Searcy believes that Zimmer brings up a valid point. He can't think of another Nebraska symbol that would be better than the Sower. Ripley's point is well taken. This is an agriculturally dominated state and the Sower seems to represent that. Searcy wondered how the jury would be comprised. Rankin replied there would be four members. They would like to see one from Lincoln, one from Omaha, one from the middle of the state and one member from the west.

A possible time line of events was discussed.

Shea-McCoy noted that they have met with Ken Svoboda of the Lincoln City Council and he seemed excited about this project.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.